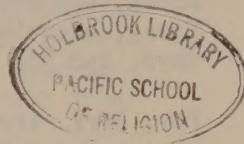


#499 - June 25, 1976

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KOREAN SITUATION INTENSIFIES

This report on the changing situation of the Korean Christian Church replaces the statement, promised last week, by LEE Chul Yong. --Eds.

The Korean churches face their gravest challenge by the ROK government in recent years. A new surge of arrests centering on members of the Seoul Metropolitan Organization (SMCO) seems to indicate that the government is preparing to brand the organization communist. "Of all the tribulations we have been through in recent years," says Rev. KIM Kwan Suk, National Christian Council of Korea General Secretary, "this is the severest."

Between May 25 and June 17 eleven SMCO members were arrested, their homes and offices thoroughly searched, and their friends and relatives interrogated. To the NCC/K delegation which went to protest the arrests, Interior Minister KIM Chi Yul declared he has "strong evidence" that all arrested are communists.

SMCO, an ecumenical organization to help the poor become self-reliant and secure their basic human rights, has been active for several years. It operates mainly in the slum areas in and around Seoul, incurring government wrath for its work with the landless squatters there. Chairman Rev. PARK Hyung Kyu and General Secretary Rev. KWON Ho Kyun have been arrested and jailed three times previously. In spite of government harassment and the constant threat of arrest and imprisonment, however, SMCO members continue to work for the poor.

On June 21 the NCC/K Committee on Human Rights met to analyze the changing situation, concluding that:

1. Authorities intend to label SMCO as a communist organization
2. The mission of the church is not clearly understood by Korean government officials.
3. The latest turn of events poses a serious challenge to the church in Korea.

The committee asked the NCC Executive Committee to take a firm stand on the issue, reporting details of the recent arrests and disseminating information to all churches. It also suggested the NCC/K clarify its position on communism, protest illegal government search of NCC offices, and educate all member churches on a long-term basis about the Christian position on the various questions involved. This education process would include holding prayer meetings in all churches on June 26 and the following Sunday to mark the anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. Also recommended was the sponsoring of seminars on the church's mission and communism.

MORE

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SMCO workers arrested include Rev. Park and Rev. Kwon, Rev. CHO Sung Hyuk, Rev. KIM Tong Wan, Rev. LEE Kyu Sang, Rev. HUH Byung Sub, LEE Chul Yong, KWANG In Suk, KIM Kyung Nam, and KIM Hong Jo. Rev. MO Kap Kyung, who once worked for SMCO but now pastors on Cheju Island a hundred kilometers from the south tip of mainland Korea, was arrested on Cheju and brought to Seoul. In addition, Rev. LEE Chi Kyong, secretary of the NCC/K Human Rights Committee, was detained for four days, and his and his secretary's homes were searched.

Rev. Park, arrested on June 5 and interrogated for six consecutive days without sleep, found that his entire life story is on file. The file includes information on his childhood behavior, friends and relatives, and articles and books.

As the Korean situation worsens, reporting becomes more difficult. As we try to keep our readers up-to-date on the latest changes in the Korean Christian situation, we often find ourselves "missing the forest for the trees" and failing to supply the background material that we would like to. For a fuller picture of the Korean situation, with background material and in historical context, we especially recommend LETTERS FROM SOUTH KOREA And DOCUMENTS ON THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN KOREA, both reviewed in our last issue.--Eds.

THE MEDIA AND THE CHURCH

Catholics Look at Media Responsibility

Sunday, May 30, Japanese Catholics joined Catholics worldwide to mark the tenth Social Communications Day. Japanese Catholics, who in previous years had used an independent nationwide theme, this year focused on the Vatican-selected theme, "The Mass Media -- Human Rights and Duties."

Catholics discussed the theme at meetings across the nation. In Tokyo 150 interested participants met for an all-day session of workshops, lectures and film-viewing at Tokyo Cathedral. In his welcome, Arch-Bishop SHIRAYANAGI Seiichi told the group "We today cannot consider mission without concerning ourselves with the mass media."

The Tokyo meeting, planned by Fr. AOKI Shizuo, divided into four workshops in the morning. The most popular, with 50 participants, was led by Sophia University professor Fr. KAWANAKA Yasuhiro, who serves on the Vatican Commission on Social Communications. Participants brought samples of their own church publications to the practical workshop, where they received suggestions from the group. The workshop decided that editors of local church publications would build horizontal relationships among themselves for sharing information and help. Professionals working in various mass media fields were well represented in another group, which discussed mass media and its handling of religious news.

The group focusing on education of the mass media audience was addressed by SUZUKI Midori, a student of citizens' movements in the United States and translator of a citizens' group report on TV and children. All participants felt the influence of television on their homes and discussed the issue with feeling. They urged viewers to take more responsibility in controlling the content of broadcasts.

In the fourth group, titled "Justice and Peace," Fr. Yamada Kaizo discussed the influence of Japanese business in the Philippines. He condemned Japanese mass media for failing to report the true conditions and the problems faced in the islands. Participants urged further concern for this question.

THE CIRCLE OF CONCERN WIDENS

by a JCAN Correspondent

Sakhalin's Stateless Koreans

Thousands of Koreans have been stranded for more than 33 years on the Russian island of Sakhalin, victims of a lingering war debt that the Japanese government has never paid. Their plight received its first international hearing--and a very sympathetic response--at the Habitat Forum held in Vancouver from May 31 to June 11, paralleling the United Nations Habitat Conference.

However, while the UN Conference issued a statement acknowledging "the right of individuals to seek humane lives in a place of their own choosing," Japanese government delegates to the UN meeting remained cool when invited to discuss the concrete case of the Sakhalin Koreans with concerned representatives of the Habitat Forum.

The Habitat Forum was a series of hearings conducted by 49 non-governmental agencies. The World Council of Churches, with a delegation of 175 persons, was the largest participant. On June 2, the Rev. Dr. LEE In Ha, a member of the WCC delegation and pastor of the Kawasaki Church of the Korean Christian Church in Japan, introduced into the Asia section of the Habitat Forum the problem of the Koreans in Sakhalin. Mr. NISHIZAWA Koichi, a Catholic layman and member of the group of 17 Japanese lawyers who have instituted a law case on behalf of the Sakhalin Koreans traced the lines of the tragic history and impasse. There was widespread interest in and support for their cause and, at the suggestion of KANG Moonkyu, an International YMCA observer at the UN Conference, a telegram was sent to Japanese Prime Minister MIKI Takeo.

The telegram to Miki from the WCC/Habitat Forum urged him "in humanity's name to intervene immediately and expedite the return of these people, who are the responsibility of Japan...." Habitat delegates sought to discuss the matter with Japanese government representatives; however, the Japanese declined.

The presence of the Korean population on Sakhalin dates back to Japanese development of this bleak, cold island off the coast of the Asian continent for shipbuilding, construction and mining during Japan's expansion across Asia in the 1930s. Conscribed for heavy labor in Japanese industries were an estimated 80,000 Koreans, whose own country had been annexed to Japan in 1910.

When World War II ended and Korea was liberated, Koreans on Sakhalin expected to be able to return to their homes. The Japanese government evacuated an estimated 400,000 of its own people as Russia retook possession of the island it had relinquished to Japan in 1905. Later Japan took special action to permit the return of Korean men married to Japanese women. But it made no effort to evacuate the Koreans and eventually claimed it was not responsible for them inasmuch as, under the terms of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, they were no longer "Japanese" but now "Korean." The lack of diplomatic relations between Russia and South Korea has left them to this day, stateless and without a place to make their appeal heard.

Some still wait Under these discouraging circumstances, an estimated 36,000 Koreans are reported to have taken Russian or North Korean citizenship.

But 7,000 have continued to wait--now more than 33 years--in the hope of being able to return to their homeland; they have explicitly expressed this desire in correspondence. Many are now in their 50s and 60s, having come to Sakhalin as young men. But others are much older, having volunteered to go in place of their sons on what was originally a "two-year" term of duty. For most of the 7,000 "the homeland" is South Korea; for some it is Japan, where their families were taken during the period of Japanese domination.

Since 1958, an organization formed by a Korean who returned with his wife has been working on behalf of the detained Koreans. In 1970 another volunteer organization was formed. Recently a group of Japanese lawyers have instituted a suit against the Japanese government in the name of one Korean in Sakhalin as a test case and have sought the help of international agencies in resolving the complicated legal aspects. All agree that primary responsibility for arranging and financing the relocation of the Sakhalin Koreans who wish to leave should lie with the Japanese government.

The Research Action Institute for Koreans in Japan, an activity of the Korean Christian Church in Japan, has taken up the cause of the Sakhalin Christians, in cooperation with the existing groups, to help strengthen their efforts and secure international backing for the appeals of Sakhalin Koreans to the Japanese government to expedite their return to their homes. Meanwhile, the Koreans abandoned in Sakhalin remain a blot on the image of a new Japan which the government is trying so hard to project.

* * *

JAPAN, ASIA, AND THE CHRISTIAN ROLE

Urban Industrial Mission Conference

Over 40 concerned Christians from all over Japan gathered at Oiso Academy House June 18--20 to discuss "Christians in Japan -- A Responsible Role in Asia." Sponsored by the Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) Committee of the National Christian Council of Japan, the conference was designed to offer action-oriented groups and individuals the opportunity to share experiences and coordinate strategies. The last meeting was in 1973.

The conference opened with a critical analysis of Japan's position--Japan in Asia, Japan vs. Asia -- politically, socially, economically and culturally. From this base participants went on to discuss the varied forms of exploitation practiced both within Japan and by this country abroad. Five different areas were considered:

1. Japanese corporate exploitation in Asia -- Participants heard a report on a group of local fisherpeople in the Philippines who are resisting construction of a large-scale Japanese steel mill. The mill, which Kawasaki Steel Co. originally planned for construction in Japan, was blocked by Japanese pollution victims and consumer groups who protested the high levels of pollution it would bring. Conference participants condemned the misery caused by "exported pollution."
2. The plutonium economy and citizens' movements in Japan -- Participants examined a variety of questions, including: Are atomic power plants really needed in Japan? What cost are we willing to pay for them? Who will finally profit, the people or the big power companies?
3. Mechanization of agriculture -- How can outside aid be best used to improve the lives of Asian farmers without disrupting the social fabric of their communities? Participants heard of a typical situation: Small gas-motored tillers, bought with overseas aid, require gasoline and repairs. To pay for gasoline, electricity and the other products of semi-industrialization, young people are leaving the rural areas in droves to find work in city sweatshops, intensifying the problems of Asian slums.
4. Exploitation of Asian women -- The group was reminded that cheap consumer goods imported into Japan are products of cheap sweatshop labor, mainly of young women who come to the cities from Asia's rural areas. Japanese male tourists also contribute to the sexual exploitation of Asian women, creating a market for purchased sex which pulls many Asian women into prostitution.

MORE

5. Community organization as a movement to establish ethnic identity--The work of the Kawasaki Korean Christian Church, which developed a nursery program for Korean and Japanese children, was cited. Church members found that as they worked to realize the concrete goal of the nursery, they were also building a stronger sense of ethnic identity and individual worth (JCAN #495, April 23, 1976). Also cited was the fight for employment by Korean-in-Japan PARK Chong Suk, who was finally reinstated as a regular employee by Hitachi Corporation (JCAN 1974, March 8 through Oct. 3).

At the conference participants sought specific ways to engage themselves effectively in the situations they had discussed. Each of them, they asserted, will form a core group in their own areas to tackle fund-raising and to gather and disseminate information. They pledged to form a tight network both within Japan and with other Asian peoples.

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A NEW LOOK AT SEMINARY EDUCATION

by Ellen CLARK

Doshisha University's School of Theology

Ellen Clark, associate editor of the United Methodist monthly NEW WORLD OUTLOOK, recently spent two months in Japan researching and writing.

--Eds.

One of the fastest-growing, most controversial seminaries in Japan is the School of Theology of Doshisha University in Kyoto, which admitted its one hundredth class in April for the 1976-77 school year. It is one of seven seminaries related to the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan).

Three years ago the seminary eliminated baptism and a minister's recommendation as entrance requirements. Overhauling the curriculum, it did away with required courses in the graduate school and all but one required course in the undergraduate school, Introduction to Theology. Enrollment has climbed from about 130 students in 1973 to 200 this year, 165 of them undergraduates. But only one-third of the first-year class professes Christianity.

"A lot of people in the church suspect us of heresy or secularism," laughs genial Bob FUKADA, United Methodist Japanese-American missionary who is professor of practical theology. Throughout its 100-year history the seminary has had the reputation of a rebel, he says, "but we're more orthodox than people realize. Actually we're providing a good number of ministers for the church."

The Rev. Mr. Fukada admits that many students choose Doshisha's seminary because of its comparatively easy entrance requirements. Since the number of applicants to the seminary has jumped, the average grade of the seminary students on the standardized university entrance examination has risen from roughly 250 to 320 out of a possible 500. But that grade still falls below the 390 average mark scored by students entering the liberal arts school.

All the same, once they are in the seminary, the students display a commitment to their education. Very few take advantage of the option to transfer to other schools within the 20,000-student university after two years. And a few students transfer into the seminary from other schools within the university. Of last year's 14 undergraduates, five went on to the seminary's graduate school.

"In their self-introductions at the beginning of the school year, many of the non-Christian students express an authentic interest in Christianity," Fukada says. "We offer them a chance to freely look at their own lives and the direction they want to take. They don't have that opportunity in Japan's high-pressured high schools."

MORE

Self-interest, namely the desire to escape chronic deficits, was a factor in the seminary's radical switch, acknowledges Fukada, the only missionary on the seminary faculty. More important, the Japanese student unrest of 1968-69, which forced the closing of the university for eight months, triggered a thorough reassessment by the faculty of theological education.

Changes Hard on Faculty "We were too authoritarian," Fukada recalls. Changes that the seminary has introduced—team teaching, interdisciplinary studies, maximum course electives—may be unusual in Japan, Fukada says, but they have become standard techniques in the United States."

Interdisciplinary courses offered last term in both the theological school and the university's liberal arts school proved very popular. The seminary's eminent scholar, Dr. TAKENAKA Masao, co-taught two of them, a course on industrial mission and another on Doshisha and the modernization of Japan.

The changes at the seminary have been wrenching for the faculty nonetheless. Professors reportedly have had to go through a process of reeducation themselves. Fukada finds teaching the school's first-year theology students difficult.

"I can't take any traditional Christian concepts for granted," he explains. "But, though uncomfortable, teaching a bunch of students with no theological consensus is an exciting challenge."

It's too early to evaluate Doshisha's experiment, says Fukada, who is also director of the North East Asia Association of Theological Schools. For the time being the seminary is concentrating on improving the quality of the program and straightening out its kinks.

In the long run Doshisha may follow the American pattern and operate only a graduate school of theology. As the undergraduate seminary has taken on more and more of the appearance of a liberal arts school, other faculties at Doshisha question its continued existence. However, Fukada believes that as long as Japanese academic education retains its rigid character, Doshisha's undergraduate seminary will meet a need.

"There should be a place within the university where a kind of free process, a truly searching education, can take place," he says. "At the Doshisha School of Theology we encourage that self-discovery through interdisciplinary biblical and theological study."

FIRSTS FOR ASIAN RURAL INSTITUTE

For the first time in its 16-year history, ARI at Nishinasuno has two African trainees, a Ghanaian Methodist minister and a Nigerian Anglican school headmaster. Another ARI record is the enrollment in 1976 of nine women -- teachers, principals and development workers in rural areas of Asia. Up until this year, only 14 of the 150 participants from 17 Asian countries have been women. ARI has made recruitment and training of women a priority.

CORRECTION -- In our last issue (June 11, p. 1) we referred to SMC as the Seoul Metropolitan Christian Organization. Although the group is church-sponsored, the name is Seoul Metropolitan Community Organization.

JCAN begins its summer publishing schedule next month; we'll be putting out one issue a month during July and August. Have a good summer, all!